

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

The following is a complete listing of the claims, as amended herein. The text added by amendment is shown with underlining, and the text eliminated by amendment is shown by ~~strikethrough~~.

1. (currently amended) A method of making microparticles of a sustained release ionic conjugate containing a free carboxyl group-containing biodegradable polymer and a free amino group-containing drug which are ionically bonded to each other, the method comprising:

obtaining a first solution in which said conjugate is dissolved, wherein said solution comprises at least one part acetone, acetonitrile, ethyl acetate, tetrahydrofuran, glyme or any combination thereof;

adding said first solution ~~as small droplets~~ through an atomizing nozzle to a first liquid to form a first dispersion, wherein said first liquid is miscible with said first solution, and said conjugate is not soluble in said first liquid and precipitates out of said first dispersion; and

isolating said conjugate from said first dispersion.

2. - 3. (cancelled)

4. (currently amended) A method according to ~~any one of claims 1-3~~ claim 1, wherein said drug is a peptide.

5. (previously amended) A method according to claim 1, wherein said biodegradable polymer is a polyester made of lactic acid, e-caprolic acid, glycolic acid, trimethylene carbonate, or p-dioxanone; or a copolymer thereof.

6. (previously amended) A method according to claim 1, wherein said drug is soluble in said first liquid.

7. (previously amended) A method according to claim 1, wherein said biodegradable polymer is a polyester comprising lactic acid, or glycolic acid; or a copolymer thereof.

8. (original) A method according to claim 7, wherein said polyester further contains malic acid, tartaric acid, citric acid, succinic acid, or glutaric acid.

9. (previously amended) A method according to claim 4, wherein said peptide is a somatostatin or LHRH.

10. (previously amended) A method according to claim 1, wherein said first liquid is alcohol or water; or a mixture thereof.

11. (original) A method according to claim 10, wherein said first liquid is ethanol maintained between about 0°C and -30°C or isopropyl alcohol maintained between about 0°C and -70°C.

12. (previously amended) A method according to claim 1, wherein said first solution contains acetone or acetonitrile.

13. (previously amended) A method according to claim 1, wherein said first solution is obtained by:

dissolving said biodegradable polymer in a second liquid to form a second solution;

dissolving said drug in a third liquid to form a third solution, wherein said third liquid is miscible with said first liquid and said second liquid; and

mixing said second solution and said third solution to form said first solution, wherein said mixing causes said drug to ionically bond to said biodegradable polymer and form said conjugate in said first solution.

14. (original) A method according to claim 13, wherein NaOH or KOH is added to the second solution prior to mixing said second solution and said third solution.

15. (previously amended) A method according to claim 13, wherein said second liquid is acetone; and said third liquid is water or acetone; or a mixture thereof.

16. (previously amended) A method according to claim 1, wherein said first solution is obtained by dissolving said biodegradable polymer and said drug in a second liquid to form said first solution, thereby forming said conjugate in said first solution.

17. (original) A method according to claim 16, wherein said second liquid is acetone or a mixture of acetone and water.

18. (original) A method according to claim 17, wherein said biodegradable polymer is first dissolved in said second liquid, a base is then added to said second solution, and said drug is subsequently dissolved in said second liquid.

19. (previously amended) A method according to claim 1, wherein said conjugate is isolated by centrifuging or filtering said first dispersion.

20. (original) A method according to claim 19, wherein said first solution is partially or completely evaporated from said first dispersion prior to isolation of said conjugate.

21. (previously amended) A method according to claim 20, comprising the additional steps of mixing said isolated conjugate with an aqueous mannitol solution and vacuum drying said mannitol solution.

22. - 39. (cancelled)

40. (original) A method according to claim 8, wherein said polyester comprises lactic acid, glycolic acid and tartaric acid.

41. - 64. (cancelled)

65. (original) A method according to claim 21 wherein said polyester comprises lactic acid, glycolic acid and tartaric acid.

66. - 67. (cancelled)